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EBI8WASC 1 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK 2 3 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 4 11 Cr. 605 (RJS) v. 5 RANDY WASHINGTON, 6 Defendant. -----x 7 8 November 18, 2014 3:15 p.m. 9 Before: 10 HON. RICHARD J. SULLIVAN 11 District Judge 12 APPEARANCES 13 PREET BHARARA United States Attorney for the 14 Southern District of New York 15 CHRISTOPHER DIMASE Assistant United States Attorney 16 DAVID GORDON 17 Attorney for Defendant 18 Also present: IRA LONDON, CJA Attorney on duty 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

(Case called)

THE DEPUTY CLERK: For the government.

MR. DiMASE: Good afternoon, your Honor. Christopher DiMase for the government.

THE COURT: Mr. DiMase, good afternoon.

For the defendant.

MR. GORDON: David Gordon for Mr. Washington.

THE COURT: Mr. Gordon, good afternoon.

Mr. Washington, good afternoon.

It's been a while since we have been here together.

This is a case in which the jury returned a guilty verdict on all counts some time ago. Sentencing has been put off a number of times to allow Mr. Washington to make certain motions, we had a change of counsel in the interim, and also more recently, after my decision of this summer, July 31st, to allow the parties to sort of confer to see whether or not they could reach some sort of agreement as to what might be considered a more just sentence, I think could only be considered a more just sentence.

I received a letter on Friday from Mr. DiMase advising me or apprising me of the recent developments between the parties. According to the letter, the government apparently has offered to dismiss the second 924(c) count, which would have the effect of lowering the mandatory sentence from 50 years to 25 years, which is a pretty sizable deduction. The

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government, however, has conditioned that offer on Mr.

Washington waiving certain appellate rights and rights to

collaterally attack the sentence and the conviction. This is

apparently something Mr. Washington has declined to do. And so

the government proposed that we schedule this conference to

"permit the Court to allocute the defendant regarding his

7 decision to reject the government's offer."

MR. GORDON: Your Honor, with respect to attacking the sentence, I think under the government's new offer, should the sentence be above the stipulated guidelines, above the top of that range, I think the government's position is he can still appeal that sentence. So he is not giving up all rights to appeal the sentence.

THE COURT: That wasn't clear to me.

MR. GORDON: It would be the same terms as in a plea agreement. Under the standard plea agreement, the defendant always has the right to appeal any sentence that is above the top of the stipulated range.

THE COURT: I don't know what the stipulated range is in this case.

Is there a range that would be stipulated to as part of an agreement?

MR. DiMASE: We have discussed that, and what it amounts to is the same range that is currently set forth in the PSR for Mr. Washington, 292 to 365, plus 60 months on the

bottom and the top end which accounts for the mandatory consecutive five year sentence on the first 924(c) count.

This probably bears noting. It's in the government's letter, but since the trial conviction, the United States

Supreme Court decided Alleyne, which requires a jury to make specialized findings on things that increase a mandatory minimum sentence, for example, brandishing or discharging a gun in a 924(c) context. So as the government's letter makes clear, at this point 50 years is the mandatory minimum. You take away one of the 924(c) counts, and we are down to five on the remaining 924(c) context.

THE COURT: Right. But there is a mandatory 20 on the drug count.

MR. DiMASE: Right. The guidelines would be 290 to 365, plus 60 months on the bottom and top end of that range, with a mandatory minimum of 25 years. That's what the guidelines would amount to. And I have apprised Mr. Gordon of that range. I think Mr. Gordon's position is it is kind of academic because Mr. Washington is not interested in any agreement where he is waiving his appellate and collateral attack rights. I think the competency issue may be the issue that he is seeking to litigate down the road.

I should note, as made clear in the government's letter, Mr. Washington would also not be required to waive any claim of ineffective assistance of his trial counsel, Mr.

Freeman, or Mr. Gordon for that matter, as part of this agreement. Under the attorney general's new policy, it has made very clear in plea agreements with the government that defendant need not forfeit those rights even where they make a general appellate waiver.

THE COURT: I am not sure what appellate issues Mr. Washington is focused on. Maybe he hasn't fully focused on them yet. But of the motions made so far, the motion relating to his competence to engage in plea negotiations, and I guess by extension to go to trial and be sentenced, it was one that was made and rejected by me. So if he wants to appeal that, the government is saying that's a deal breaker on the offer, right?

MR. DiMASE: Yes, except any appellate challenge besides ineffective assistance of counsel claim or a challenge to a sentence above the top of the guidelines range, as we discussed here today, would be barred by the agreement.

I should note this is the exact same appellate waiver that any other defendant entering into any plea agreement, usually in the context of a pretrial plea, would be required to agree to as part of their plea agreement. And here we are taking the extraordinary remedy in dismissing the count posttrial.

THE COURT: I get that, but I think that the current policy of the Department of Justice would be not to file the

second 924(c) in a case like this one, right?

If we hadn't had a trial and this case was getting ready to go to trial, according to the attorney general's new policy with respect to the filing of a second 924(c), it probably would not be filed, right?

MR. DiMASE: I am not aware of any formal policy of the attorney general on the issue of multiple 924(c)s. There certainly has been quite a bit of guidance lately on PFIs on (b)(1)(A), (b)(1)(B) mandatory minimum sentences, but I don't believe there has been any formal policy in the area of 924(c) charges. And that's an issue that is certainly being worked through.

THE COURT: All right. Maybe we will come to this in a minute.

Mr. Gordon, is there something you would like to say?

MR. GORDON: I am troubled by the competency issue. I know your Honor made a ruling, but we have a situation where two psychologists said that, because of Mr. Washington's cognitive impairment, there is a serious issue as to whether he understood the consequences of losing trial.

THE COURT: I don't think that's really what they said.

MR. GORDON: Also, that he had a totally unrealistic view of his chances of winning the trial.

THE COURT: I think they said it might affect his

judgment in those regards, but I don't think they went so far as to suggest that he was not competent, as that term is defined, and I don't think there is a different definition in the plea context than there is in the trial context or the sentencing context.

MR. GORDON: Your Honor, I think at a hearing, had your Honor held a hearing on exactly what the psychologists meant by their reports, as to the extent of his impairment and as to whether he could intelligently make a decision whether or not to plead guilty given his impairment, I think your Honor might have reached a different result.

THE COURT: I didn't see anything in the report that even made this an issue. I have ruled on that.

MR. GORDON: I don't expect your Honor to reach a different conclusion. However, it seems to me I don't know that that's something I can waive. If you're wrong, then he should be given an opportunity to accept the original offer. And the government is saying for him to litigate that on appeal, he has got to be willing to spend the rest of his life in jail if he loses. He would have to serve an additional 25 years if he loses that argument on appeal.

The government is saying that he can appeal the effectiveness of counsel issue. If he wins that, all that would happen is it would be sent back to you. The only way he can win it on appeal is if the circuit said that you were wrong

in finding that there was no reasonable probability that he would have accepted such a plea so you didn't have to get to the issue of who is telling the truth. It would be sent back to you for a hearing, in which after hearing you might reach the same conclusion, you might not, or you still might not believe Mr. Washington.

THE COURT: I get all that. If he doesn't take this deal, then Mr. Washington retains all the abilities to appeal any ruling that I have made. He can appeal anything.

MR. GORDON: That's correct. But it seems to me, I haven't examined the trial record carefully enough for me to feel that every possible issue would be frivolous, but my gut reaction is he is not going to win on the search issue, whether he had standing, and I don't think he is going to win on whether he had a fair trial. It seems to me the only issues that are probably viable on appeal are the ineffective assistance of counsel issue and also the competency issue.

THE COURT: The ineffective assistance of counsel he will be able to appeal with the government's agreement.

MR. GORDON: Even if he wins that, he is only ultimately going to do better if your Honor finds in his favor on remand.

THE COURT: I am not sure what you're telling me that I didn't already understand.

Mr. Washington, the bottom line is this. The

government has made this offer. I can't order them to do this. They have the ability to dismiss this second 924(c), which would have the impact of reducing your mandatory sentence from 50 years to 25 years. That's a pretty significant difference. I can't order them to do it. So they get to attach the conditions that they want to attach to that decision. The implications, of course, are that if you turn this deal down and you appeal and you don't win on appeal, or, as Mr. Gordon said, you even win on appeal, but it comes back to me to determine your competence, and I have a hearing and ultimately determine that you were not incompetent, then you're stuck with the 50 years.

I want to make sure you understand that. Do you understand those are the stakes here? I can't order them later to say, well, come on, just drop that second count. They don't have to listen to me. They don't have to listen to me on any of this. So the Supreme Court has made it clear they are certainly allowed to condition their offers this way. So I think the best that anybody can do is ask them to reconsider, which I have done and Mr. Gordon has done. But you should understand that there's no guarantees that they are going to do it again. This is a one-time-only offer. Do you understand that?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

THE COURT: And you still want to forgo, not take

advantage of this offer, because you want to be able to appeal without any restrictions, that's what you wish?

I just want to make sure that he is not going to later say that he didn't understand.

That's what you wish to do?

THE DEFENDANT: Say it again.

THE COURT: Is it your position that you're willing to reject this offer the government has made to come down from a 50 year mandatory minimum sentence to a 25 year mandatory minimum sentence? That's their offer. They can argue for a higher sentence, but unless they do this, I can't sentence you to less than 50 years. So you're willing to give up their offer to dismiss the second gun count, which carries a mandatory consecutive 25 years on top of the 25 years that are already required, you're willing to give up that offer because you don't want to have any restriction on your appellate rights?

MR. GORDON: Before he answers that question, I have a suggestion. Perhaps it might be wise, given what is at stake here, is for your Honor to assign another attorney, an additional attorney, to review these issues with Mr. Washington between now and the sentence date, to see if perhaps someone else can get through to him that this would be a big mistake to not accept the government's offer. I don't see any harm being done by having another opinion here. With respect to the

1 sentence day, it would not have to change.

THE COURT: It might have to change. Sentencing is just a few weeks away.

MR. GORDON: It might have to change a little bit, but not very much, and this is pretty important.

THE COURT: It's definitely important.

MR. GORDON: My sentencing submission is due tomorrow. There is really nothing I can submit. The mandatory minimum is 50 years. There is not much I can say. So I don't really intend to submit anything.

THE COURT: I think that's fine. I can tell you confidently I am not going to sentence him to more than 50 years under the current posture of this case.

MR. GORDON: That's why I have nothing to submit.

THE COURT: That's fine.

Mr. DiMase, do you have any thoughts about the appointment of a sort of shadow counsel to just advise Mr. Washington with respect to this issue of the offer made by the government?

MR. DiMASE: I have no objection to that plan if the Court thinks it would assist Mr. Washington. The plan had been, if this request had been made today, to have Mr. Washington allocuted and then move forward. But that said, if he is not going to allocute today and he wants to speak to a second attorney, we are not going to withdraw the offer that's

been made. But there has to be an end point to it somewhere, but it need not be today.

MR. GORDON: At this point, Mr. Washington thinks he is not going to change his mind, and he doesn't want the sentence put off. So I am not going to ask that the date be changed now, but I think assigning another lawyer to at least talk to him, perhaps he might change his position about the sentence date. Right now he wants to proceed, which I think is not necessarily in his interest.

MR. FREEMAN: May I speak to Mr. Gordon for a second?

THE COURT: Mr. Freeman, who is prior counsel, is
here, and he has a right to be here, as does anybody. It's a
public courtroom. So if you wanted to confer with Mr. Gordon,
that's fine.

(Pause)

THE COURT: Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON: Your Honor, at this point I think we should keep the sentence date, but if your Honor would assign counsel, I will certainly bring counsel up to speed to discuss with Mr. Washington and me the government's offer and whether or not he should take it.

THE COURT: OK. Let me find out who is on CJA duty today, unless somebody knows. I will have to make that call.

Maybe we will take a short break just so I can determine who it is, confirm that it is not someone who would have a conflict in

this case, and once I have the name I can make the appointment. I don't know that that lawyer can get here on short notice. If they can, I will have them come over. Otherwise I will have them follow up later.

MR. DiMASE: I have one point to add. I think the government would like to have a resolution to whether or not Mr. Washington wants to avail himself to this offer before the sentencing occurs. I think the parties on both sides deserve to know what is going to happen on the day of sentence and not be in a position where there is a 25 year swing in a potential mandatory minimum based on defendant's decision that morning.

THE COURT: It's not complicated math, but I don't mind having the resolution before the sentencing.

That means either the offer expires some date before
December 3rd or we push back the sentencing a reasonable period
of time to allow counsel and Mr. Washington and perhaps Mr.
Gordon to confer a little bit. Why don't we first find out who
is on CJA duty to see if the availability of that lawyer might
inform the decision. It sounds like Mr. Washington wants to go
forward on December 3. I think ideally we all would like to
keep this on that track. It is a simple decision that has to
be made. It's an important decision, and it's very important
that Mr. Washington consider the ramifications, the
consequences of this decision, but I don't think it should take
too long to do it as long as we can line up the lawyer who is

going to talk to him about it.

MR. DiMASE: To be clear, if the defendant does want more time, we don't object to moving the sentencing date, but I think the government will provide a deadline for the offer before the sentencing date in order to have some clarity.

THE COURT: Mr. Washington, I think it is not a bad idea to have a second opinion. Do you have any objection to talking to another lawyer?

THE DEFENDANT: No.

THE COURT: I think it's in your interest. There is no harm that could come of it. Ultimately this is your decision, but I think it's not a bad thing to have a little more time to think about it and perhaps have another lawyer looking at the issue and giving you his or her thoughts on the subject. OK?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

opinion in which I provided my thoughts. I can't call it more than that, and I can't compel anybody to do anything here. The government certainly has no obligation to withdraw that second 924(c). I appealed to the government's sense of justice in doing the right thing because it seems to me that there is something troubling about a case in which the offer was ten years for the crime, so the perception was the crime before plea warranted ten years worth of punishment but after trial it

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was worth 50 years worth of punishment, which seems to me that the government is more interested in deterring people going to trial than deterring crime, which I think is a bad perception to have out there.

I think tying these conditions to this offer, which I commend them for, because I think it was a good decision to make this offer, but tying this offer to the waiver of appellate rights also does look small. It looks as though this decision is not based on prosecutorial judgment as to what would be an appropriate sentence, but, rather, as a guid pro quo for giving up appellate rights, as though the waiver of appellate rights is worth 25 years, or put the other way, the refusal to waive those rights needs to be deterred and punished to the tune of 25 years. I think that doesn't look good. seems to me that the government should have confidence in its own proof and confidence in its positions on appeal. seem to me that the government should decide what is the appropriate sentence, and what is the appropriate mandatory sentence, and if it isn't 50 years, that shouldn't turn on whether or not the defendant is willing or not willing to waive his appellate rights.

That's just my opinion. I can't order anybody to do anything, but that's what it seems to me. It's my reference to Title 21, Section 851, where the attorney general has made it clear that sort of reflexive filing of very draconian mandatory

sentencings in the context of prior felony informations in 851, that has been revisited and now it's the exception that that would be brought. It's not to be used as a trial penalty. There does seem to be some tension between that policy and the policy as it either exists or used to exist with 924(c)s. I would think the same criticisms that would apply to one would also apply to the other, and there is a certain inconsistency in adopting a policy like the attorney general has announced for prior felony informations under 851 and yet persisting with this policy under 924(c)s.

There are some differences, and maybe one can articulate a reason for a different policy, but there does seem to be a tension, and it seems to me that if the government's view is that 50 years is too long, then they should take the 25 year mandatory consecutive off. The decision as to whether it is unjust, whether it is not the right thing, shouldn't turn on whether or not the defendant is going to waive his appellate rights it seems to me.

In any event, Ira London is the attorney who is on CJA duty today. I saw him earlier. I don't know if he is still around. I can reach out to him to see if he is around. It might be easier while everybody is in the building to have them huddle up. Any objection to that?

MR. GORDON: No.

THE COURT: We will make that call. So everybody sit

tight while we do that, and then I will be back with you shortly.

I didn't mean to lecture the government. The government has tremendous power in many regards. They have the power to offer a 10 year deal, the power to offer a 25 year deal, the power to offer a mandatory 50 year deal, and I think ultimately they have to determine what is just, what is right, and whether or not that decision turns on the quid pro quo of waiving certain rights or certain appellate arguments. We are really talking about just one or two arguments that would survive and be real. So it seems to me that maybe we are not arguing about that much.

So think about that, Mr. DiMase, while I am reaching out to Mr. London. It's not something you can decide today, I am sure, but do think about it.

MR. DiMASE: Yes, your Honor.

(Recess)

THE COURT: I will note that Mr. London has arrived.

Thank you, Mr. London.

MR. LONDON: Good afternoon, your Honor. Twice in one day.

THE COURT: That's right.

Mr. London is the CJA lawyer on duty, and so I don't know, Mr. London, if anybody has sort of buttonholed you and told you why you are here.

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MR. DiMASE: He just got here, your Honor.

In a nutshell, here is the situation. THE COURT: Mr. Washington, who is seated next to you, was charged in an indictment. In broad strokes, he was offered a plea deal by the government that involved a sentence of about ten years. declined that offer and went to trial. The government superseded in, I quess, the interim, and Mr. Washington was ultimately convicted on two 924(c) counts with a prior felony information on the narcotics count, so at the time a mandatory 52 year sentence. An intervening Supreme Court case has made that a mandatory 50 year sentence because the jury made no special finding on brandishing the firearm for the first 924(c), which would have made it a seven year mandatory consecutive. So instead it's just a five year consecutive, but not that much difference.

So, now the situation is that Mr. Washington is facing a mandatory term of imprisonment of 50 years. There have been various motions posttrial. I have ruled on those. But in ruling and denying the motions made by defendant, I did ask or implore the government to consider whether it might be more just to withdraw or dismiss the second 924(c) count. The government, I think to its credit, has agreed to do that and has offered a plea deal of a mandatory 25 years, with a guidelines range that, in the government's view, is higher than that but takes the second 924(c) off the table. But that offer

is contingent on Mr. Washington waiving certain appellate rights and collateral attack rights, which he thus far is inclined to reject.

Mr. Gordon is representing him. Mr. Freeman previously represented Mr. Washington. We have a sentencing date of December 3rd. And the thought was it might be useful for Mr. Washington to get a second pair of ears as to the second opinion from counsel just with respect to the offer made by the government. So that's what you're being proposed as, as sort of the second pair of eyes and ears just to advise Mr. Washington with respect to the government's recent offer.

I was hoping that you could meet with him, get information from Mr. Gordon and from the government, as you need, but meet with Mr. Washington, discuss the offer, advise him on it, and then perhaps report back to the Court with a letter by December 1, if that's enough time. We have a sentencing date of December 3. That's what makes this a little tight. Mr. Washington would prefer not to adjourn the sentencing. But if it were impossible for you to meet that tight deadline, I might be inclined to do a very short adjournment of maybe a week or ten days.

In very broad strokes, that's where we stand.

MR. LONDON: May I have a moment, Judge?

I will be happy to comply with the Court's schedule.

I will meet with Mr. Washington next week at the jail, and I

will confer with Mr. Gordon briefly.

THE COURT: You think you ca

Court, just advising what Mr. Washing

THE COURT: You think you can write a letter to the Court, just advising what Mr. Washington's views are, or do you think we need to have another conference to do this in person?

MR. LONDON: If that's appropriate, I will.

THE COURT: The government has requested that we resolve the issue of the plea offer before sentencing. Mr. Washington has requested that we go forward with sentencing on December 3rd, so that doesn't leave a ton of time in between.

Mr. DiMase, you wanted me to allocute Mr. Washington with respect to the offer if he decides to decline it, right?

MR. DiMASE: That's correct, your Honor. I think it's appropriate here. Given Mr. Washington's allegations about the plea offer made prior to trial, I just foresee the possibility of this coming up again, and I think it's appropriate to allocute him.

THE COURT: We are scheduled for a sentencing on December 3rd at 10:30. Let's plan on coming back together December 1st at 2:30, if you're all available.

MR. GORDON: I am on duty that day in the Southern District so I am certainly available.

THE COURT: You will be around. It shouldn't take long.

MR. LONDON: That's fine.

MR. DiMASE: That's fine, your Honor.

EBI8WASC THE COURT: All right. Let's see where we are then. 1 2 Mr. DiMase, you think about what I said. 3 Mr. Washington, you think about what I said, and then December 1, I guess, hopefully you can tell me what your 4 5 decision is. All right? Any questions that you have now? 6 THE DEFENDANT: No. 7 THE COURT: Is there anything else we should cover 8 while we are here today? MR. GORDON: I don't think so. 9 10 MR. DiMASE: Nothing from the government. 11 THE COURT: Let's see where we get. 12 Mr. Gordon, anything else we need to do on the record? 13 MR. GORDON: No. 14 THE COURT: Thanks. Have a good day. 15 (Adjourned) 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

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